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ABSTRACT

This paper presents a two-phase approach to drug prevention which can be implemented by the schools. Materials presented here describe aproaches taken by various schools or school districts nationwide. Phase One concerns board of education policies. The offenses of simple possession or use of a drug and possession with intent to sell are differentiated and appropriate disciplinary action for first, second, and third offenses are considered. Suspension and the recommmendation for expulsion are discussed. Phase Two of the drug prevention approach involves various forms of hass_ing actions by the schools, designed to teach students that drug use is too risky to engage in at school. Five techniques are described: (1) locker visits; (2) hall passes; (3) the "poor child must be sick" approach; (4) covert photography; and (5) the use of marijuana sniffing dogs. The use of dogs is described as a step-by-step procedure which will teach students that it is expensive and risky to bring drugs onto school grounds. (NB)

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A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO DRUG PREVENTION

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A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO DRUG PREVENTION

Material presented here describes approaches taken by various schools or districts nationwide. To the best of our knowledge, these elements do not all exist in any single school district. This drug prevention program is based on the assumption that drug use in public schools is illegal. It evolved out of the observation that marijuana use, in particular, proliferates when students are unable to say to their friends: "Not here, it's too risky." The "motto" that drives this approach is that, "Drug use on the campuses of the XYZ school district will become a high-risk proposition for students."

Phase One: Board of Education Policies. One useful example of school board policy says, in brief, that there are two levels of seriousness -- use of a drug, and possession with intent to sell it. For simple possession, the first offense results in suspension for five days; the second offense requires a suspension for the balance of the semester; the third offense results in suspension for the balance of the year and a recommendation to the school board that the child be expelled. Possession with intent to sell drugs has only two steps; suspension for the balance of the semester, and suspension for the balance of the year with recommendation for expulsion.

NOTE: A "Memorandum of Understanding" with the local police department exists that stipulates that, when a child is confirmed to possess marijuana, police will transport that child to a local precinct for detention until a parent comes for him or her.

NOTE: All secondary schools in the school district using this system have their own field-test kit in order to ensure that the substance confiscated from the student is, indeed, marijuana.

NOTE: Students are charged with violating drug codes each time marijuana is found in their possession to ensure that there is no possible question regarding their violation of school board policies. Appropriate school district administrative actions always follow.

Phase Two: "Hassling Actions" by Schools. These various programs are all part of a process that I describe as "putting the shoe on the other foot." These programs are meant to be SERIOUS, BUT LIGHT-HEARTED. They help reinforce the process whereby students can claim that illicit drug use is simply too risky to engage in during school time.

1.) Locker visits. At the beginning of the school year when lockers are assigned, be sure that the locker-assignment sheet clearly states that the lockers belong to the school, that school personnel may enter them whenever they please, and that bolt cutters will be used to remove any non-authorized locks placed on the lockers. Then the administrative staff of the school takes a little time every day or so to visit lockers. Open the locker of Jim David or Mary Susan and leave a note. For example: "Hi,

Mary. I understand that today is your birthday. Have a happy day," or "Hello, Jim. I stopped by to see you at your locker, but you were not here. Have a good day," or "Hi, Jim. I just wanted to let you know that I am proud that you have not been sent to my office all week. Keep up the good work. See you around." Pretty soon the kids will get the idea that what you are doing is more eccentric than threatening, but that lockers in your school are not the place to keep contraband. And that is what you want.

2.) Hall passes. Frequently, school halls during class time are crowded with students who are milling about, conducting drug sales, extorting small amounts of money, or smoking. It is possible to "retake" the halls by changing the physical characteristics of hall passes. Have your wood shop make 18 X 24 quarter-inch ply, rounded-corner boards. Have them painted either day-glow red or day-glow yellow. Select one of the colors as a hall pass and the other color as a "visitors pass." Paint room numbers at the top of one of the sets, two boards per room. Apply many coats of varnish to prevent the boards from giving splinters. Place a clip in the middle of each board so that the regularly completed green hall passes can be affixed. Use boards of the other color for visitors, as stated. Print "Visitors, Welcome" at the top of the boards. Coat the boards with varnish. You might want to glue a school map to the middle of the board before you paint it. Now, when supervisory personnel look down school corridors they will see large, brightly colored boards, or they will see someone that does not belong there. And that is what you want.

3.) The "The Poor Child Must Be Sick" approach. Send a student whom you suspect to be under the influence of drugs to the nurse. Let the nurse deal with the child. The nurse, under the guidance of the principal, knows that the school is primarily concerned with the health and welfare of children, and so will want to call the parent. If the case is sufficiently serious, the nurse may want to have the child sent to the emergency room of the local hospital for a stomach-pumping treatment. All with the authorization of the parents, of course. One or two stomach-pumpings and students are likely to get the idea that going to the nurse is not quite as innocuous as it might seem; that serious drug use in school is not wise. And that is what you want.

4.) Covert photography. Preferably from some place where you cannot be seen (such as the back of a window-glazing truck or other school-district delivery vehicle), use a telephoto lens to photograph groups of students around the school. Have the pictures enlarged to the point that you can identify the youth and see what they are doing (exchanging money, smoking marijuana, gambling, drinking from a whiskey bottle). Have the identified student and his or her parents come to the principal's office for a visit. Present the pictures and ask the student to explain his or her actions. Just that, no more.

NOTE: You may want to consider, as a matter of school district policy, whether or not you want to have a commissioned law officer present when you interview the student and his parents. Regardless of the decision, stress that no charges are being contemplated; it is just that you want the child to explain his or her actions in a reasonable way. After all, there may be a reasonable explanation.

NOTE: There are two goals of this procedure: first, to prevent the parent from saying: "Not my kid, it ain't," and second, to so shock the students that they break up, at least for a while, the clusters they form outside the school building. And that is just what you want.

5.) Marijuana Sniffing Dogs. In order to undertake this project you must first obtain an agreement with your local police department that they will cooperate with the spirit of this game. You both have to agree that the purpose is <u>not</u> to arrest students in posession of contraband, but to make the students feel that it is expensive and risky to bring drugs onto campus.

First day: principal uses the PA system at about 10am to announce -- with apparent reluctance -- that the training division of the local police department is going to come out AFTER LUNCH to demonstrate the capabilities of their newly-aquired drug-sniffing dog. Allow the students all morning to talk about this problem and dispose of their contraband. They will then be nice and polite and non-threatened when it comes time to attend the demonstration. And that's just what you want.

About a week later (after the students have had time to re-supply: same routine as above, but shorten the time. The principal will come on the PA system just <u>before</u> lunch to announce that one of the training officers was unable to attend the last demonstration and that the police will be back JUST AFTER LUNCH for a re-run. Again, pandemonium and disposal. Just what you want.

About two weeks later (again, after re-supply): same routine as above, but now a <u>very short</u> time period. Principal can come on just before the passing bell and announce that as the student body has been so friendly and cooperative during the past training episodes, the Training Director has invited police observers from a neighboring jurisdiction to see how these demonstrations are done -- and that they are actually already here. Tell the students that just after they are settled into their classes (in about 10 minutes) the officers will begin to visit some of the rooms to provide the demonstration. Again, pandemonium. Costly to the students who must resupply. Mad rush to the toilets to flush the contraband. And that is just what you want.

NOTE: As already stated, the key goals are to make it expensive for the students to bring drugs onto school grounds, and to make the dog-sniffing episodes very controversial yet inoffensive. It is critically important not to establish a "we/they" dichotomy where the administration and the police are pitted against the students. The adults must see this exercise as part of a program to "hassle" those with contraband on school grounds rather than as some devious method to arrest youth.

Obviously, as adults responsible for the safety and security of adolescents, you are in charge. But that does not mean that the forceful initiatives that you take cannot be imaginative. As you address the many facets of drug prevention in schools, bear in mind that while we cannot legislate morality, we -- as adults -- can certainly communicate to younger generations with humor and with example, the mores of the communities in which you and they live.